

## **REMARKS**

New claim 9 includes the features of claims 1-2. New claim 12 includes the features of claims 5-6. The main claims now recite the central management system and means for (the step of) setting an identifier associated with each port of each node or “network element (NE)”. This identifier comprises the node identifier of the adjacent node.

The prior art of U.S. Patent No. 6,567,422 B1 to Takeguchi addresses the problem of timing loops in a fundamentally different way to the present invention. According to the teaching of Takeguchi, source identifiers are transmitted between the nodes of the synchronous communications network. The inventor of the present invention has removed the need for exchanging these source identifiers between nodes. The present invention controls the selection of a synchronization signal for output from a node. Unlike the prior art, the selection is based on identifiers obtained from the ports at which the various synchronization signals are input to that node. These port-based identifiers comprise the node identifiers of the adjacent node from which the synchronization signal came. Unlike the prior art, these port-based identifiers are supplied to each node by a central management system.

The exchange of source identifiers between nodes causes problems in practical communications networks owing to presence in a typical network of equipment from a variety of manufacturers. Unfortunately, these manufacturers use different formats/conventions in generating identifiers resulting in severe compatibility problems. While the arrangement of Takeguchi could work well in a single-vendor network, trying to apply this to a multi-vendor network would require significant additional effort in translating the identifiers.

Allowance of claims 9-14 is respectfully requested.

Petition is hereby made for a two-month extension of the period to respond to the outstanding Official Action to September 22, 2004. A check in the amount of \$420.00, as the Petition fee, is enclosed herewith. If there are any additional charges, or any overpayment, in connection with the filing of the amendment, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any such deficiency, or credit any such overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 11-1145.

Wherefore, a favorable action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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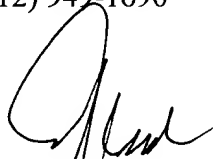
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